"India has been among the fastest growing economies in the world over the last two decades, and has achieved trend improvements in growth, literacy mortality and poverty rates. In recent years, deft handling of monetary policy has helped India to successfully weather the Asian crisis, while maintaining low inflation and a comfortable external position. Yet despite these gains, poverty rates remain high. With more than a third of the population still living below the official poverty line. This uneven progress raises questions about the impact of the economic and structural reforms implemented since the mid-1980s on growth in India, and what more can be done to make greater inroads into poverty reduction".

(c) The specific objectives of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) such as (i) priority to agriculture and rural development with a view to generating adequate productive employment and eradication of poverty; (ii) accelerating the growth rate of the economy with stable prices; (iii) ensuring food and nutritional security for all, particularly the vulnerable sections of the society; and (iv) providing the basic minimum services of safe drinking water, primary health care facilities universal primary education, shelter and connectivity to all in a time bound manner are expected to speed up the tempo of development process in the country. Some of the steps to achieve these are detailed in the Ninth Five Year Plan.

Policy for future utilisation of Non-lapsable Central Pool Funds in North-East

4999. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the priority and criteria followed till now and policy finalised for future utilisation on the fund-from non-lapsable pool of resources to the beneficiary States in terms of PM's special package to the North-East;

(b) the details of guide for transfer of fund by various departments to the non-lapsable Fund indicating total amount transferred till March, 2000 and list of departments exempted from this purview;

(c) whether those States which are unable to pay 10 per cent matching grant will be debarred from availing this benefit; and

(d) if so, the logic behind such a decision which will only add to forced non-utilisation.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) and (b) All Central Ministries/Departments are required to spend atleast 10% of their Budget on the schemes/projects for the benefit of the North Eastern Region and Sikkim. As per the recent decision, some Departments such as Expenditure, Revenue. Planning, Ocean Development, Space, Supply, Atomic Energy and Economic Affairs have been exempted from this requirement. Shortfall in meeting 10% norm for the North East and Sikkim is to be pooled in a Central Pool of Resources. The Ministries/Departments have been advised to open a Minor Head for the North East and Sikkim in their Demands for Grants.

RE 1999-2000 provision for the Central Pool was Rs. 303.97 crores. A Committee has been constituted to administer the Central Pool. Project proposals are considered and recommended from time to time by this Committee for support from the Pool on their merit. While considering the projects preferential treatment is accorded to medium term projects particularly in the infrastructure sector and proposed to be executed by Central Departments/Agencies.

(c) There is no such proposal under consideration at present in the Planning Commission.

(d) Does not arise.

Urban Poverty

†5000. SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that urban poverty has increased during last ten years;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) if so, the details of the percentage of urban poverty during the last five years, year-wise and State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE DEPARTMENT

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.